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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S DISCUSSION WITH BARUTA MAYOR HENRIQUE
CAPRILES RADONSKI

Classified By: Political Counselor Robert Richard Downes
for Reason 1.4 (b) and (d).

1, (C) Baruta Municipality Borough Mayor and key leader of the opposition political party Primero Justicia (PJ) Henrique Capriles Radonski told the Ambassador December 18 that he was optimistic regarding the opposition's chances to increase their number of mayoral and governor positions in the October 2008 state and local elections. In a meeting that included the DCM and POLCouns, Capriles acknowledged that this would depend on the opposition's ability to work together to avoid fielding competing opposition candidates for the different positions.

12. (C) Capriles said he was not surprised by the December 2 defeat of President Chavez' constitutional amendments because the last poll he reviewed on December 1 indicated the yes/no factions were virtually tied at 49/49 percent each. He said he arrived at the National Electoral Council (CNE) at 9pm on Election Night when results should have been released and feared the government might try to steal the election results. A pro-government National Assembly deputy present told him shortly after 9pm that the CNE had the preliminary results and were discussing them with President Chavez. He also said about that time more National Guard troops began arriving and as the evening went on things were growing more and more tense until the CNE announced the "No" vote victory. He said that PJ's judgment was that the CNE official results reported were in rough agreement with their own tally of the actas (individual poll reports) provided by opposition election monitors.

13. (C) The Mayor indicated that the opposition is now focusing on the October 2008 state and local elections and that he was considering running either for the mayor of Caracas (Caracas has a mayor as well as five borough mayors, including Capriles), or for governor of the state of Miranda (which surrounds the eastern and southern sections of Caracas). Diosdado Cabello, the current governor is largely viewed as corrupt, Capriles said, and has ties to some of the persons charged in Florida in the Antonini case. Capriles noted that he knew one of the indicted individuals, Carlos Kauffmann, but had broken off contact with him when Kauffmann began doing business for the government.

14. (C) Capriles said he expected President Chavez to clean his own house after the referendum's defeat, continuing to value loyalty over competence. He also expected the president to continue to conduct political prosecutions of opposition figures such as himself. (Capriles was charged and acquitted in December 2006 on six counts including

inciting a riot in connection with events at the Cuban Embassy in April 2002. The prosecution has appealed and is reinstating the charges.)

DUDDY